

NAVY MEDICINE LIVE

THE OFFICIAL BLOG OF U.S. NAVY AND MARINE CORPS HEALTH CARE • 2011 & 2012 WINNER OF BEST NAVY BLOG

[Home](#) | [About](#) | [Disclaimer](#) | [Navy Medicine News](#) | [Navy Medicine WebSite](#)

Written on JUNE 25, 2013 AT 12:51 PM by VKREMER

Providing Medical Care for Pacific Partnership 2013

Filed under [FLEET AND THE FLEET MARINE FORCE](#), [HEATH](#), [HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF](#) (NO COMMENTS)

By **Cmdr. Carolyn Currie**, director, theater engagement, [U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery](#)



As you can imagine, once we hit the pier in Samoa, we were off and running. It was non-stop until we pulled away. The days in Samoa were a mixture of hard work, discovery, relationship building and fun. Half of the medical assets set out immediately for the more northern island of Savaii, where they spent five days camping in the villages where they worked. The rest of us were on the pier in Upolu every morning to watch the sunrise while we packed our gear and ourselves into vans like sardines and headed for remote villages all over the island.

The island was incredibly beautiful, lush, humid and friendly. The villagers greeted us every

Navy Medicine Video

Navy Medicine is a global healthcare network of 63,000 Navy medical personnel around the world who provide high quality health care to more than one million eligible beneficiaries. Navy Medicine personnel deploy with Sailors and Marines worldwide, providing critical mission support aboard ship, in the air, under the sea and on the battlefield.

Navy Medicine Social Media

 Follow us on Twitter

 Join us on Facebook

 Read our publications

 View our photo stream

 Watch our videos

Navy Medicine Live Archives

[February 2015 \(12\)](#)

[January 2015 \(12\)](#)

[December 2014 \(17\)](#)

[November 2014 \(11\)](#)

[October 2014 \(15\)](#)

[September 2014 \(20\)](#)

morning with a freshly cooked breakfast and sent us away every afternoon with a feast for our afternoon meal, each preceded by a prayer and thank you from the village elder and chief.

We spent the days diagnosing dermatological conditions we had never seen, marveling at asymptomatic blood sugars and blood pressures beyond belief, teaching preventative health strategies, giving out toothbrushes, sunglasses and hugs. By the end of our stay in Samoa, we all filed back on the ship with our lives forever changed by our experiences.

The highlight of the mission stop had to be the young Air Force medic who found himself in a situation he could not have imagined. He was a dental tech assigned with a dentist to a remote clinic when the villagers brought in man who had stopped breathing. In the middle of a procedure, the dentist was unable to leave his patient so all eyes went to the tech. He quickly started CPR on the man and managed to initiate breathing again, making him the village hero.

Within hours they brought another patient in. This time it was a woman screaming as her unborn baby was threatening to come at that very moment. The clinic staff ran to the dental room and grabbed their hero. So impressed by his earlier performance, they were sure he would perform a delivery just as adeptly. And of course he did! It wasn't until he arrived back at the ship that the magnitude of the day's events hit him and the adrenaline left him exhausted and bewildered.

Over the next few days he shied away from all of the accolades and attaboys. But I saw him earlier today as he was being interviewed by the public affairs officer (PAO) aboard the ship and he was standing a little taller and smiling a little wider. And I had to laugh as the PAO asked him if he had ever delivered a baby before and he said, "No, I had never even SEEN a baby being born except for when I watched the video they showed us in medic training." What an advertisement for Air Force medic training!!! Then I asked him if he cut the cord and he responded, "No, I let the dad do that." What a professional young man we have on our PP13 team!

August 2014 (14)

July 2014 (13)

June 2014 (8)

May 2014 (11)

April 2014 (9)

March 2014 (14)

February 2014 (7)

January 2014 (7)

December 2013 (7)

November 2013 (12)

October 2013 (7)

September 2013 (14)

August 2013 (13)

July 2013 (11)

June 2013 (22)

May 2013 (15)

April 2013 (14)

March 2013 (14)

February 2013 (14)

January 2013 (12)

December 2012 (11)

November 2012 (11)

October 2012 (7)

September 2012 (9)

August 2012 (12)

July 2012 (13)

June 2012 (17)

May 2012 (22)

April 2012 (14)

March 2012 (13)

February 2012 (14)

January 2012 (13)

December 2011 (13)

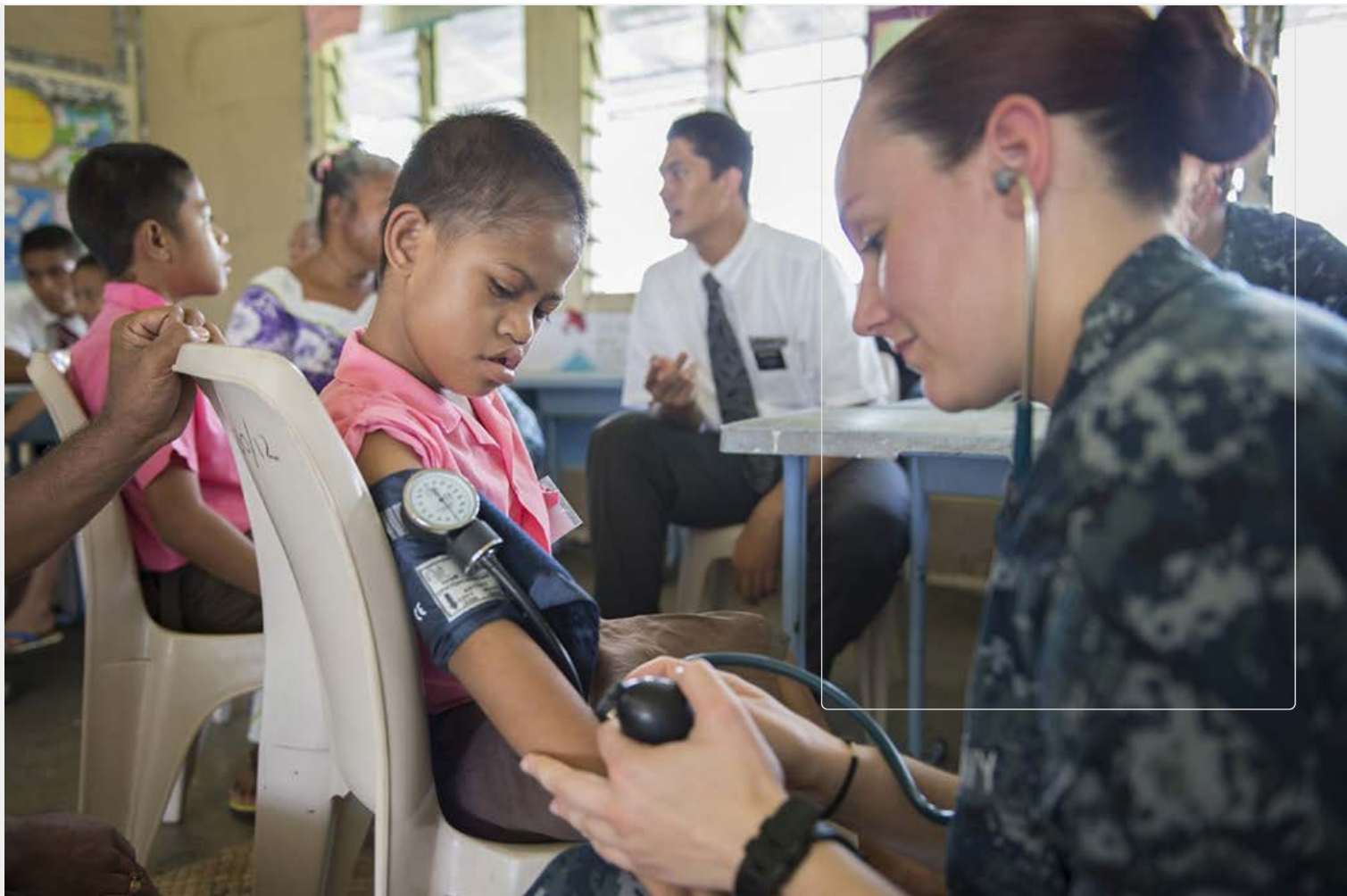
November 2011 (20)

October 2011 (22)

September 2011 (12)

August 2011 (16)

July 2011 (10)



U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Tara Macdonald checks the vital signs of a child being screened during a Pacific Partnership health fair to compete in Samoan Special Olympics activities. Pacific Partnership is the largest disaster response-preparation mission in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. The mission contributes to stability and security by opening dialogue and fostering friendships between leaders so that they are better prepared to work together when a regional disaster strikes. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Samantha J. Webb/Released)

After an exhausting week in Samoa, we were all actually thrilled to get back to sea and spend a couple of days relaxing. For me...the work had just begun. I spent the next several days gathering all of the after action reports, lessons learned and debriefed each event team. Meanwhile, we were also putting the finishing touches on our Tonga planning. We arrived in Tonga several days ago and hit the ground running again. "Hitting the ground" has been more of a challenge here since we are anchored several miles off the coast and are using the [landing craft utility](#) ship to get back and forth every day. We arise at zero dark-thirty, climb aboard the LCU to begin the 90 minute trek across to the port. Just after sunrise we hop aboard buses headed for clinics, hospitals and public health fair venues across the island. The weather here is much cooler and less humid. We have found quite a large community of ex-pat Kiwis here who own amazing bakeries and coffee shops! It's a real treat when we can talk our bus driver into stopping by one on our way to the event sites!

We will be saying good-bye to a fair chunk of our PP13 medical team as we close out our Tonga engagements next week, as the remaining mission stops will leave a smaller footprint. We are already grieving the loss of our newly found friends, but know that the bonds we have forged on this floating grey resort will remain. Our next stop is a port call.

I hope all is well at home! It is Father's Day already in Tonga, so I wish all of the dads out there a wonderful day, especially my own father, my step-dad and my brother. I love you very much and appreciate how each of you have contributed to the person I am today! Without your love and support I'm not sure I would be a 20 year Naval Officer floating somewhere in

the South Pacific changing the lives of people and loving every minute of it!

← Next post

Previous post →

vkremer tagged this post with: [BUMED](#), [humanitarian assistance](#), [Navy](#), [Navy Medicine](#), [Pacific Fleet](#), [Pacific Partnership 2013](#)

Read 221 articles by [vkremer](#)